



Creating Customized Community Action Plans: Responding to the Needs of the Community

Public Health Problem

In California, an estimated 20,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer each year, and, on average, 13 women die of breast cancer each day. The incidence of cervical cancer is more than five times greater among Vietnamese women in the United States than among white women.

Evidence That Prevention Works

Early detection and appropriate treatment could prevent virtually all cervical cancer deaths and about 15%–30% of breast cancer deaths among women older than age 40. The initial costs for breast cancer care, if diagnosed early before it has spread, may be as much as 32% lower than the initial care costs for breast cancer diagnosed after it has spread.

Program Example

Through the CDC Foundation, the California Endowment funds the Special Services for Groups (SSG) Inc.'s Promoting Access to Health (PATH) for Women, a Los Angeles-area collaboration that focuses on reducing disparities in rates of breast and cervical cancer among Asian American and Pacific Islander women. SSG held focus groups and interviewed 2,100 Pacific Islander (Chamorro, Samoan, and Tongan) and Southeast Asian (Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, and Vietnamese) women in Los Angeles and Orange counties. SSG works with seven ethnic populations (Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, Vietnamese, Chamorro, Samoan, and Tongan) and draws on the leadership of its Pacific Islander and Southeast Asian community members and health care providers to develop customized community action plans and materials for each ethnic group. Each ethnic group implements its community action plan at its own level of readiness. The Samoan National Nurses Association is an example of one group that has been executing almost all facets of PATH for Women, including offering community outreach and education services, promoting a cancer ministries program with local Samoan pastors, establishing a cancer support group, and setting up mobile screening programs for community women.

Implications

Community-based programs that seek community input are responsive in meeting the needs of a particular community. This program demonstrates the importance of giving communities the materials and plans to implement an effective intervention while allowing them to execute these plans in a manner and at a pace that resonates with their own culture and community. This approach can extend lifesaving prevention programs and screening services across a variety of cultures to communities that would not likely be reached by traditional means.